In the **Language and Style** category, you have achieved a rating of **Proficient**.

You can improve your writing score in this category by revising your essay based on specific criteria.

In order to move up to the **Advanced** rating, your writing must

* demonstrate a definitive perspective and voice, as well as a clear command of conventions;
* incorporate language that attends to the reader’s interests and effectively maintains a formal style; and
* employ vivid word choice and varied sentence structure.

You should remember a few things when revising for language and style.

**Maintain Perspective and Voice**

Try to ensure your perspective and voice are clear and consistent throughout the essay. Adhere to all conventions of writing.

**Consider Your Audience**

In academic writing, you should maintain a formal style throughout the essay so your audience feels that you are presenting a serious point of view worth considering. Ask yourself the following questions:

* **Are there contractions I should break apart?** For example, consider *does not, will not*, or *had not* instead of *doesn’t*, *won’t*, or *hadn’t*.
* **Are there abbreviations I should spell out?**
* **Is there slang I can replace with more standard words and phrases?**

**Review Word Choice**

By using effective word choices and an appropriate writing style, you can express your ideas more clearly to readers. Ask yourself the following questions:

* **Are there vague or basic words I could replace to make my meaning clearer?** Consider revising to use words that are more specific to your meaning. More exact words will convey your thoughts or better illustrate a concept, as in the following example:

**Original sentence:** “Several aspects caused the Roman Empire to fall.”

**Revised sentence:** “The fall of the Roman Empire was caused by political corruption and pressure from foreign invaders.”

By replacing the vague phrase “several aspects” with the more precise phrases “political corruption” and “pressure from foreign invaders,” the writer illustrates the idea more clearly in the revised sentence.

* **Will the technical language I use be understood by my readers, or should I provide more explanation?** Explaining technical terms can show your audience that you understand the subject matter.
* **Can I make my language more vivid with action verbs?** For example, instead of saying “The number of viewers decreased,” you might revise to say, “The number of viewers plummeted.”
* **Can I make my language more concise?** For example, where you might use a phrase like “get up,” you can replace the phrase with a single word, like “rise.”

**Vary Sentence Structure**

Vary your sentence structure by combining simple sentences into compound or complex sentences. Too many simple sentences, or too many of the same type of sentence, can make your writing sound very basic or redundant. See the following example:

* **Original:** “The chef started chopping onions. She scooted them to the side. She chopped carrots and celery next. She poured oil into the pan. She turned on the stove. She dumped the chopped vegetables into the pan.”
* **Revised:** “The chef chopped the onions, scooting them to the side before starting on the carrots and celery. She then poured oil into the pan. After turning on the stove, she dumped the chopped vegetables into the pan.”

**Proofreading Checklist for Conventions, Usage, and Punctuation**

Use the following checklist to review and finalize the draft.

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| --- | --- |
| ▢ | Avoid using “I think,” “I believe,” or “I feel” in the claim statement. |
| ▢ | Ensure sentences are complete and are capitalized appropriately.  |
| ▢ | Check for run-ons, fragments, and comma splices. |
| ▢ | Check subject and verb agreement. |
| ▢ | Check for correct verb tense. |
| ▢ | Check spelling and punctuation. |
| ▢ | Remove slang words and phrases, except when using it deliberately for emphasis or effect. |
| ▢ | Ensure that formal, objective, and appealing style is maintained throughout the essay. |

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